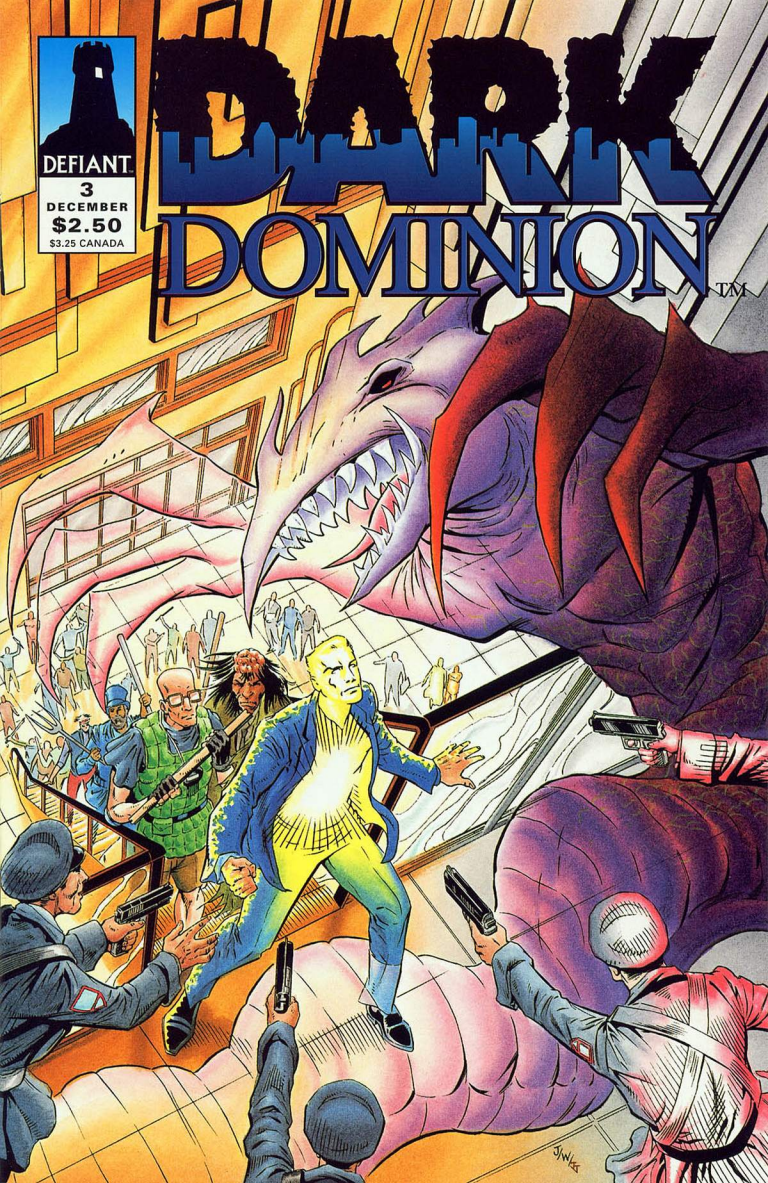
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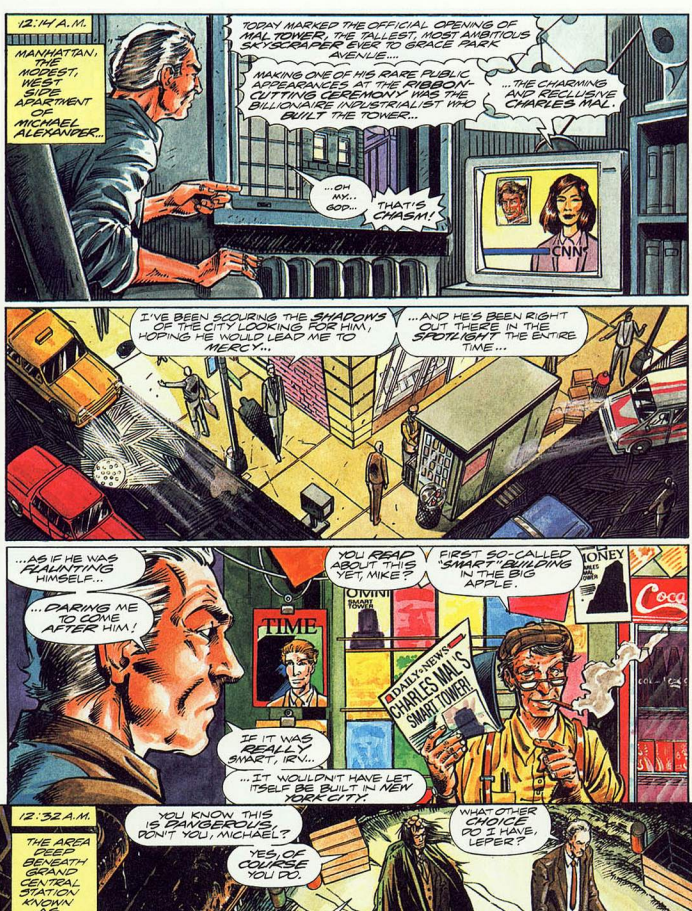
12:14 A.M.
MANHATTAN, THE NOREST, WEST SIDE APARTMENT OF MICHAEL ALEXANDER...
TODAY MARKED THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF MAL TOWER, THE TALLEST, MOST AMBITIOUS SKYSCRAPER EVER TO GRACE PARK AVENUE...
MAKING ONE OF HIS RARE PUBLIC APPEARANCES AT THE RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY WAS THE BILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIALIST WHO BUILT THE TOWER...
...THE CHARMING AND RECLUSIVE CHARLES MAL.
...OH MY... GOD...
THAT'S CHASM!
CNN
I'VE BEEN SCOURING THE SHADOWS OF THE CITY LOOKING FOR HIM, HOPING HE WOULD LEAD ME TO MERCY...
...AND HE'S BEEN RIGHT OUT THERE IN THE SPOTLIGHT THE ENTIRE TIME...
...AS IF HE WAS FLAUNTING HIMSELF...
...DARING ME TO COME AFTER HIM!
TIME
YOU READ ABOUT THIS YET, MIKE?
FIRST SO-CALLED "SMART" BUILDING IN THE BIG APPLE.
DAILY NEWS
CHARLES MAL'S SMART TOWER!
IF IT WAS REALLY SMART, IRV...
...IT WOULDN'T HAVE LET ITSELF BE BUILT IN NEW YORK CITY.
Coca
12:32 A.M.
THE AREA DEEP BENEATH GRAND CENTRAL STATION KNOWN AS THE BOWELS...
YOU KNOW THIS IS DANGEROUS, DON'T YOU, MICHAEL?
YES, OF COURSE YOU DO.
IF YOU CAUSE CHASM ENOUGH TROUBLE, HE MAY TAKE OUT HIS ANGER ON US.
WHAT OTHER CHOICE DO I HAVE, LEPER?

POOR MERCY WAS KIDNAPPED BY CHASM BECAUSE OF ME...
...AND I'LL DO WHATEVER I HAVE TO DO TO SAVE HER.
A MAN'S HOME...!
8:49 A.M.
MAL TOWER, PARK AVENUE...
HAUNTS OF THE VERY RICH- PART THREE
PLACE LOOKS LESS LIKE AN OFFICE BUILDING THAN A TOMB.
PLOTTED BY JIM SHOOTER, LEN WEIN, JOE JAMES, AND JANET JACKSON
PENCILED BY JOE JAMES / INKED BY BOB DOWNS
PAINTED BY TIM PERKINS / LETTERED BY GEORGE ROBERTS
EDITED BY DEBORAH PURCELL AND ED POLGARDY

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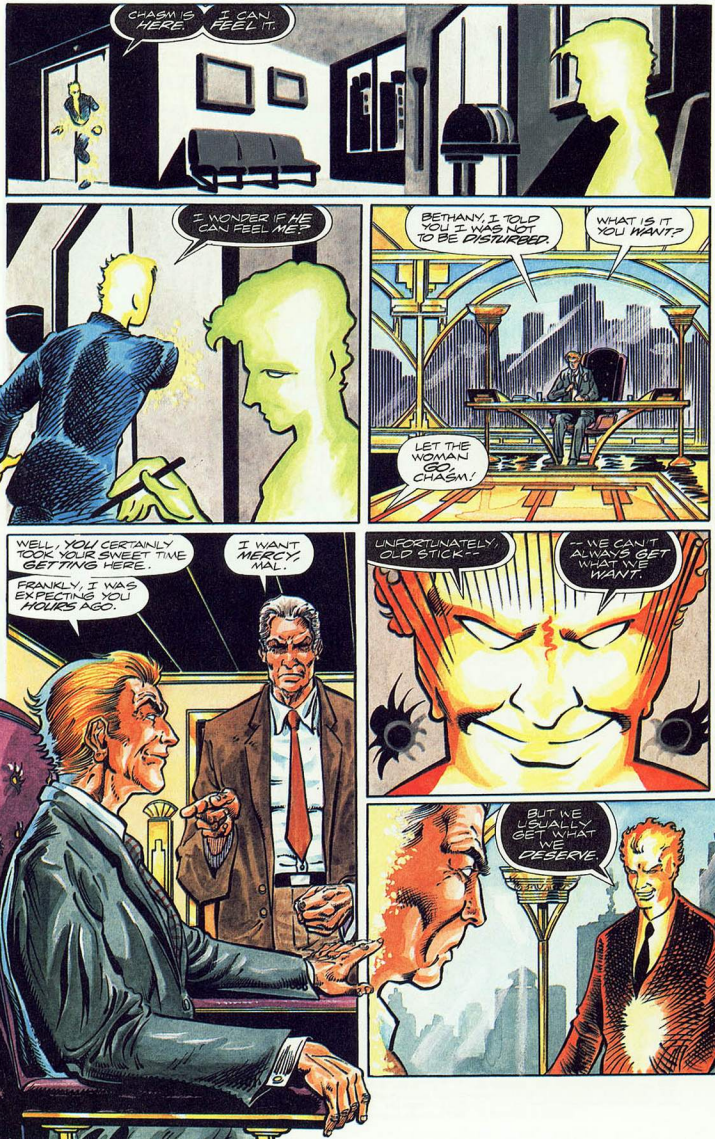
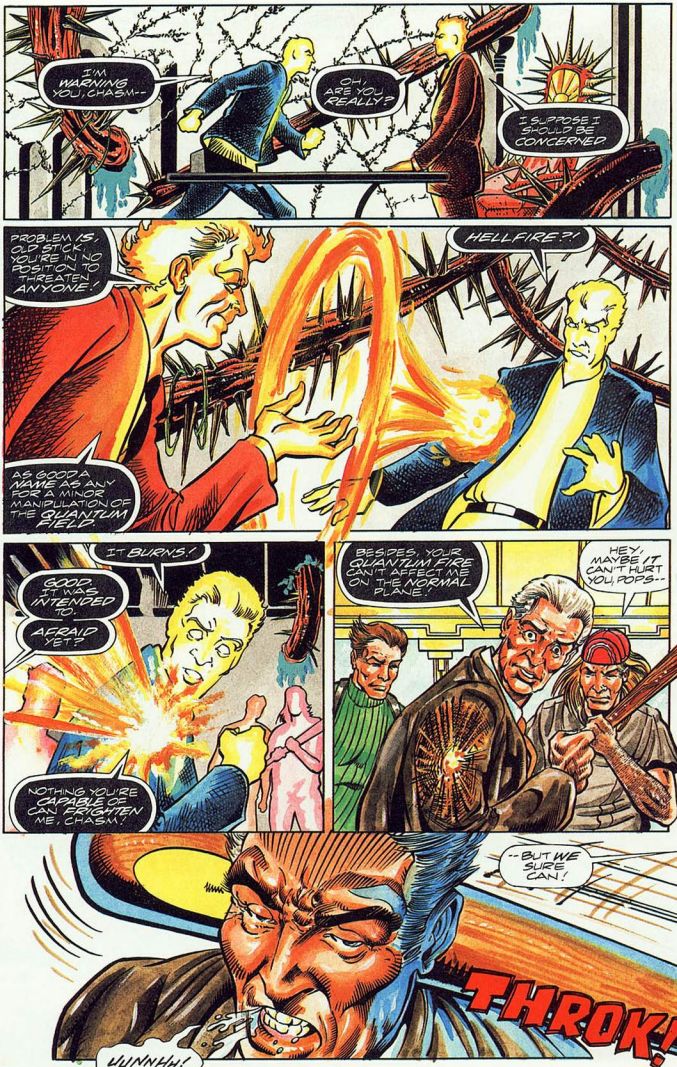
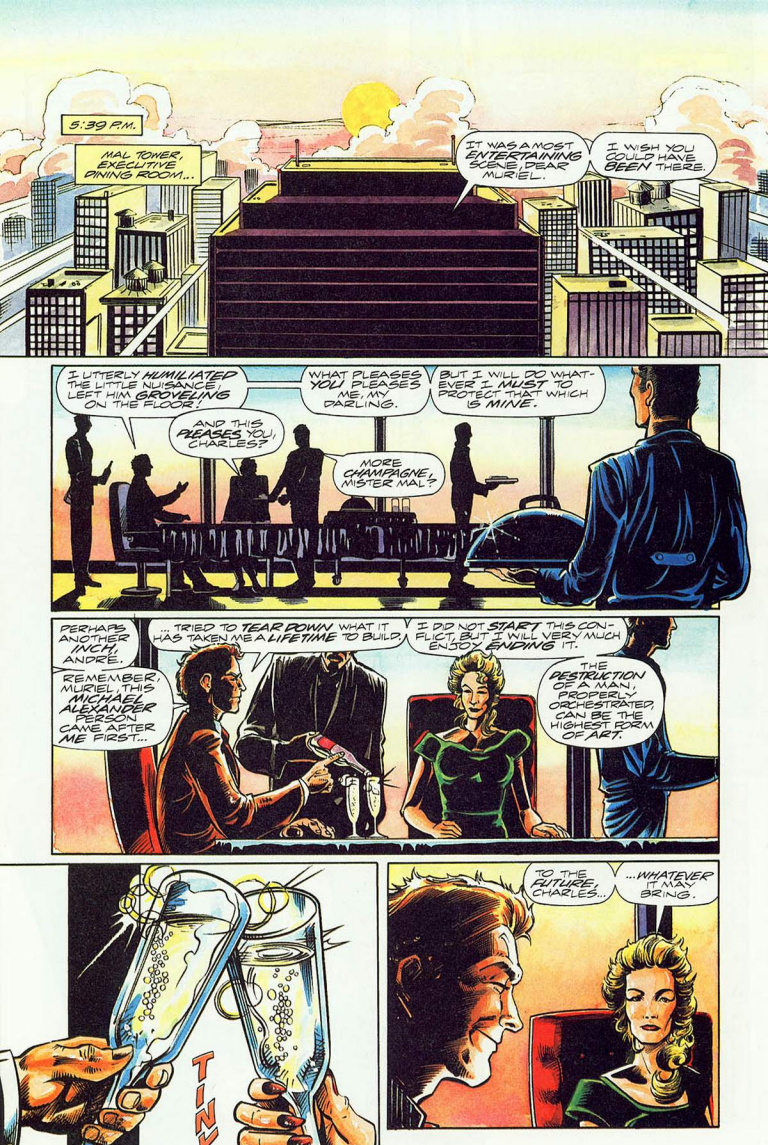
OUGHT TO BE A SIGN OVER THE DOOR READING, "ABANDON YE ALL HOPE WHO ENTER HERE."
'SCUSE ME, SIR, MAY I SEE YOUR MAGNETIC ID CARD, PLEASE?
HMMM?
OH, SURE. SORRY.
GOT IT RIGHT HERE. SOMEPLACE.
LET'S SEE... PHOTOS OF THE GRANDKIDS... CREDIT CARDS... BOOK-OF-THE MONTH CLUB MEMBER--
--OOPS!
I SWEAR, SOMETIMES I THINK MY FINGERS ARE COVERED WITH TEFLON.
NO PROBLEM, SIR. LET ME PICK THOSE UP FOR YOU.
THERE YOU GO. I THINK I GOT EVERY--
HUH?
HEY, WHERE'D HE GO?
HMMM. SEEMS CHASM IS EMPLOYING GUARDS EVEN ON THE SUBSTRATUM AS WELL.
...GO AWAY...
...LEAVE OR PERISH...
:UGGH:
OH, GET OUT OF MY WAY, WILL YOU?
:UGGK:
FLOOR, PLEASE?
PENTHOUSE.
NOW!


CHASM IS HERE.
I CAN FEEL IT.
I WONDER IF HE CAN FEEL ME?
BETHANY, I TOLD YOU I WAS NOT TO BE DISTURBED.
WHAT IS IT YOU WANT?
LET THE WOMAN GO, CHASM.
WELL, YOU CERTAINLY TOOK YOUR SWEET TIME GETTING HERE.
FRANKLY, I WAS EXPECTING YOU HOURS AGO.
I WANT MERCY, MAL.
UNFORTUNATELY, OLD STICK--
--WE CAN'T ALWAYS GET WHAT WE WANT.
BUT WE USUALLY GET WHAT WE DESERVE.


I'M WARNING YOU, CHASM--
OH? ARE YOU REALLY?
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD BE CONCERNED
PROBLEM IS, OLD PUCK, YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO THREATEN ANYONE!
HELLFIRE?!
AS GOOD A NAME AS ANY FOR A MINOR MANIPULATION OF THE QUANTUM FIELD.
IT BURNS!
GOOD. IT WAS INTENDED TO.
AFRAID YET?
NOTHING YOU'RE CAPABLE OF CAN FRIGHTEN ME, CHASM!
BESIDES, YOUR QUANTUM FIRE CAN'T AFFECT ME ON THE NORMAL PLANE.
HEY, MAYBE IT CAN'T HURT YOU, POPS--
--BUT WE SURE CAN!
THROK!
UUNNHH!

UUNNFF!
HHUUKK!
HE'S OUT, BOSS.
FAR TOO SIMPLE A SOLUTION, MY DEAR SKINNER.
WANT US TO HASTE HIM?
NO, MY PLANS FOR MISTER ALEXANDER ARE FAR FROM FINISHED.
I WANT HIM ALIVE.. AT LEAST FOR NOW.
THEN CAN WE MAYBE JUST HURT HIM SOME MORE?
TIME FOR THAT LATER.
FOR NOW JUST PUMP HIM BACK IN THE BOWELS. LET THE OTHERS SEE WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO DARE TO DEFY ME.
YOU CAN HAVE YOUR FUN DOWN THERE.
11:28 A.M.
UUNNHH
MY HEAD.. MY BACK..
EVERY MUSCLE FEELS LIKE IT'S GONE FIFTEEN ROUNDS WITH HOLYFIELD.
HE'S COMING AROUND.
FINALLY!
LEPER? ROBERT?
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO ALL OF YOU?
YOU DID.
SKINNER AND HIS GOONS BEAT US FOR BEFRIENDING YOU, DIDN'T THEY?
OH, YES INDEED, THEY DID.
CAN'T SAY I DIDN'T WARN YOU, CAN YOU, MICHAEL?
NO, YOU CAN'T.
THEY HURT US, GLIMMER.. HURT US BAD.
IM...
...SO...
...SORRY...


5:39 P.M.
MAL TOWER, EXECUTIVE DINING ROOM...
IT WAS A MOST ENTERTAINING SCENE, DEAR MURIEL.
I WISH YOU COULD HAVE BEEN THERE.
I UTTERLY HUMILIATED THE LITTLE NUISANCE! LEFT HIM GROVELING ON THE FLOOR!
AND THIS PLEASES YOU, CHARLES?
WHAT PLEASES YOU PLEASES ME, MY DARLING.
BUT I WILL DO WHATEVER I MUST TO PROTECT THAT WHICH IS MINE.
MORE CHAMPAGNE, MISTER MAL?
PERHAPS ANOTHER INCH, ANDRE.
REMEMBER, MURIEL, THIS MICHAEL ALEXANDER PERSON CAME AFTER ME FIRST...
... TRIED TO TEAR DOWN WHAT IT HAS TAKEN ME A LIFETIME TO BUILD.
I DID NOT START THIS CONFLICT, BUT I WILL VERY MUCH ENJOY ENDING IT.
THE DESTRUCTION OF A MAN, PROPERLY ORCHESTRATED, CAN BE THE HIGHEST FORM OF ART.
TINK
TO THE FUTURE, CHARLES.
...WHATEVER IT MAY BRING.

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, 9:49 A.M.
THE APARTMENT OF MICHAEL ALEXANDER.
OH, THIS IS JUST GREAT.
THE BILLS ARE ALL OVERDUE... MY BOOKS STILL AREN'T SELLING...
...AND NOW MY MAGAZINE COLUMN IS CANCELED BECAUSE OF MISSED DEADLINES. MY ONLY REGULAR INCOME. GREAT.
AND ALL FOR WHAT?
HERE I'VE BEEN PROWLING THE FILTHY UNDERBELLY OF THIS CITY LIKE SOME MIDDLE-AGED MESSIAH...
...RISKING MY LIFE IN THE QUANTUM FIELD, AND--
HUH?
I--I JUST TRIED TO CROSS OVER INTO THE SUB-STRATUM--
--AND COULDN'T.
THAT'S NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE.
HAVE TO CONCENTRATE...
...TRY TO FOCUS...
I AM NOT AFRAID.
THERE. THAT'S BETTER.
GUESS IT WAS JUST SOME MOMENTARY GLITCH.
LOOKS LIKE EVERYTHING IS BACK TO...
...NORMAL?
OH, MY GOD!

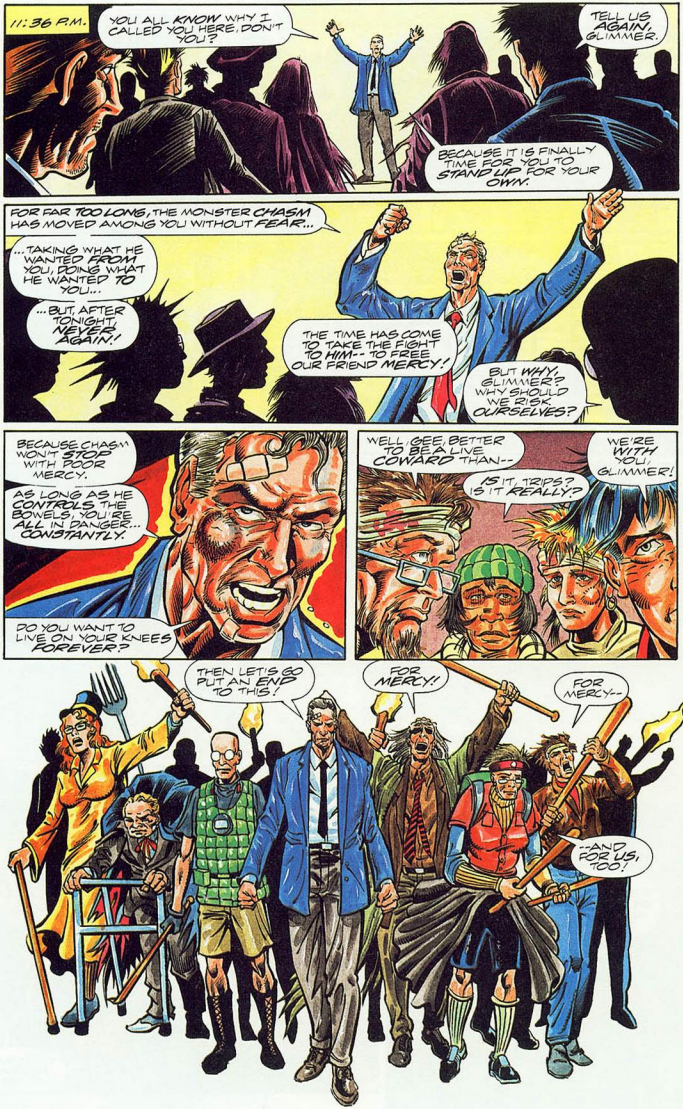
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?
I'VE NEVER LET DEMONS OF DOUBT GET THE BETTER OF ME BEFORE!
I'VE GOT TO--
BRINGG! BRINGG!
YES, WHO IS IT?
WHO?
YES, OF COURSE I'VE HEARD OF YOU.
YOU'RE INTERESTED IN WHAT?
ARE YOU SURE YOU'VE GOT THE RIGHT ALEXANPER?
WELL, CERTAINLY. I'D BE GLAD TO CONSIDER IT.
LET ME MULL IT OVER, AND I'LL GET BACK TO YOU. AND THANK YOU.
PROBLEM IS, IF I TAKE THE JOB, I'D HAVE TO LEAVE FOR THE COAST ALMOST IMMEDIATELY...
...AND I CAN'T GO ANYWHERE UNTIL I KNOW MERCY IS ALL RIGHT.
THEN MAY-BE YOU DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM, PALLY.
WELL, I'LL-BE!
...SO THIS MAJOR HOLLYWOOD STUDIO IS INTERESTED IN OPTIONING MY BOOK "DARK DOMINION" AS A BIG-BUDGET FILM--
--AND THEY WANT ME TO WRITE THE SCREENPLAY, PEEPER.
I MEAN, CHASM DOESN'T REALLY HATE MERCY, GLIMMER--HE HATES YOU.
YOU LEAVE TOWN, CHASM WON'T HAVE NO MORE REASON TO KEEP HER.
YES... I IMAGINE YOU'RE RIGHT...
THANK YOU, PEEPER. YOU'VE JUST HELPED ME MAKE UP MY MIND.

9:46 P.M.
WELCOME
TO
John F. Kennedy
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT
HI, THE NAME IS ALEXANDER.
I'M BOOKED ON COACH FLIGHT 128 TO LOS ANGELES.
AA
THERE'S SUPPOSED TO BE A TICKET WAITING FOR ME HERE.
THERE CERTAINLY IS, SIR- BUT IT'S IN FIRST CLASS, NOT COACH.
YOUR STUDIO CALLED EARLIER AND HAD YOU UPGRADED.
THEY DID?
TAA
HOW... NICE...
WELCOME ABOARD, SIR.
ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO MAKE YOUR TRIP MORE PLEASANT, JUST ASK.
THANK YOU. I'LL REMEMBER THAT.
EXCUSE ME. IS THIS SEAT 7-B?
SURE IS. LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO BE TRAVELING COMPANIONS.
MY NAME IS CLAIRE TUMEY.
I LIVE IN L.A.
I'M MICHAEL ALEXANDER.
RIGHT NOW I'M JUST A TOURIST...
...BUT LOS ANGELES IS STARTING TO LOOK BETTER TO ME ALREADY.

6:17 P.M.
TAA FLIGHT 428, EN ROUTE TO LOS ANGELES...
I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER TASTED ANYTHING QUITE LIKE THIS, CLAIRE.
IT'S ABSOLUTELY DELICIOUS.
BELIEVE ME, MICHAEL, IT'S NOT HARD TO GET USED TO CHATEAUBRIAND.
A FEW MONTHS IN L.A., AND YOU'LL HARDLY REMEMBER WHAT YOU LEFT BEHIND...
...ALL THE PRESSURE... THE FAILURES... THE FEAR...
OH?
OH.
NICELY DONE, CLAIRE.
VERY NICELY DONE.
WH-WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WHEN YOU GET TO LOS ANGELES, YOU CAN TELL CHASM IT ALMOST WORKED.
IN FACT, DON'T BOTHER!
I THINK I'LL GO TELL HIM MYSELF!

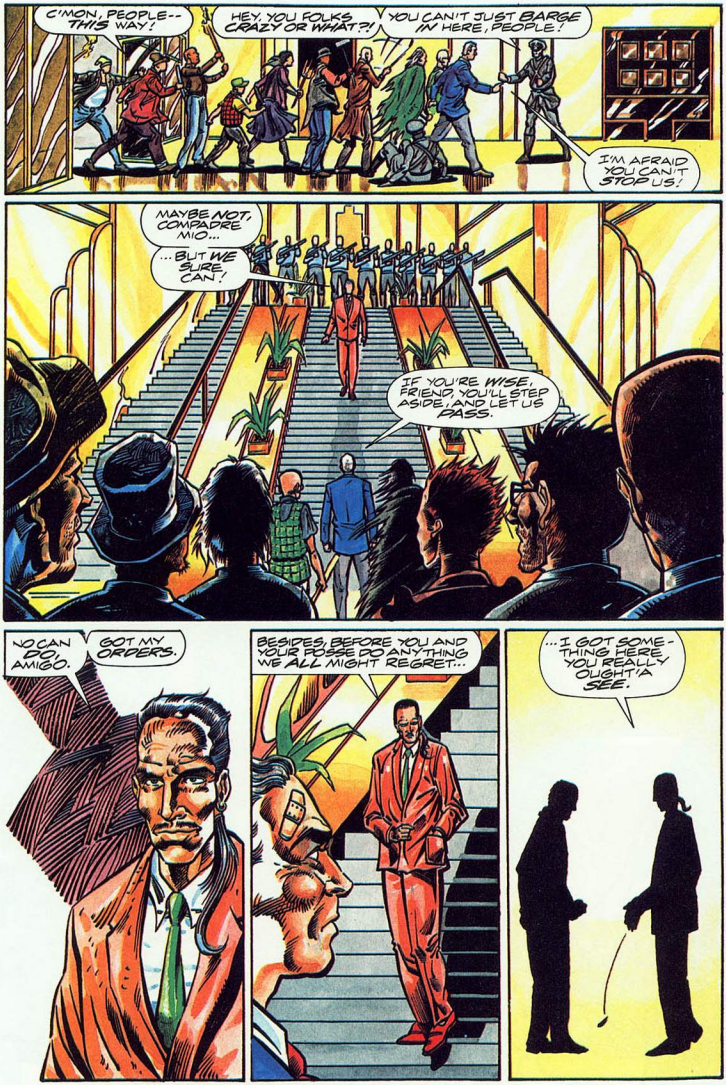
HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO GULLIBLE! SO NAIVE?
CHASM OBVIOUSLY ARRANGED THIS WHOLE THING TO GET ME OUTTA NEW YORK...
...WHICH MEANS HE CONSIDERS ME A SERIOUS THREAT.
AND, FRANKLY, HE COULDN'T BE MORE RIGHT.
HEY! WHERE IN HADES DID YOU COME FROM, FELLA?
NOT HADES, BUT YOU'RE CLOSE.
HOW FAR IS IT FROM HERE TO NEW YORK?
'BOUT 920 MILES DUE EAST, I GUESS--
--AS THE CROW FLIES!
WELL, I HAVEN'T EXACTLY LEARNED HOW TO FLY YET, FRIEND...
...BUT I'M SURE I CAN GET THERE SOMEHOW!

10:18 P.M.
THERE HAS TO BE A QUICKER WAY TO TRAVEL THROUGH THE QUANTUM FIELD...
...BUT I JUST DON'T HAVE TIME NOW TO LEARN HOW.
EVERY MINUTE I'M GONE, CHASM COMES THAT MUCH CLOSER TO RULING THE SUBSTRATUM ENTIRELY.
10:47 P.M.
THINGS ARE NOT GOOD FOR US DOWN IN THE BOWELS SINCE GLIMMER LEFT, ARE THEY?
NO, THEY ARE MOST CERTAINLY NOT.
CHASM'S PEOPLE ARE EVERYWHERE.... NOBODY IS SAFE....
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO NOW THAT ALL HOPE HAS FLED?
WHAT YOU SHOULD HAVE DONE, ALL ALONG, LEPER...
...YOU'RE GOING TO FIGHT FOR WHAT IS YOURS.
MICHAEL, YOU'RE BACK!
COULDN'T STAY AWAY.
NOW GO COLLECT THE OTHERS, ROBERT....
WE HAVE WORK TO DO!


11:36 P.M.
YOU ALL KNOW WHY I CALLED YOU HERE, DON'T YOU?
TELL US AGAIN, GLIMMER.
BECAUSE IT IS FINALLY TIME FOR YOU TO STAND UP FOR YOUR OWN.
FOR FAR TOO LONG, THE MONSTER CHASM HAS MOVED AMONG YOU WITHOUT FEAR...
...TAKING WHAT HE WANTED FROM YOU, DOING WHAT HE WANTED TO YOU...
...BUT, AFTER TONIGHT, NEVER AGAIN!
THE TIME HAS COME TO TAKE THE FIGHT TO HIM-- TO FREE OUR FRIEND MERCY!
BUT WHY, GLIMMER? WHY SHOULD WE RISK OURSELVES?
BECAUSE CHASM WON'T STOP WITH POOR MERCY.
AS LONG AS HE CONTROLS THE BOWELS YOU'RE ALL IN DANGER... CONSTANTLY.
DO YOU WANT TO LIVE ON YOUR KNEES FOREVER?
WELL, GEE, BETTER TO BE A LIVE COWARD THAN--
WE'RE WITH YOU, GLIMMER!
IS IT, TRIPS? IS IT REALLY?
THEN LET'S GO PUT AN END TO THIS!
FOR MERCY!
FOR MERCY--
--AND FOR US, TOO!

COME ON, PEOPLE, THE WAY UP IS THIS--
OH, I DON'T BELIEVE IT.
...MUST NOT PASS...
...KILL YOU FIRST...
...KILL YOU ALL...
GET OUT OF THE WAY, SLIME!
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR YOU NOW!
...MAKE YOU DARK...
...MAKE YOU DEAD...
I WARNED YOU ONCE, DEMON...
...AND THAT'S ALL THE CHANCE YOU GET.
...MAKE YOU...
...GLK:...
NOW I'M GOING TO POP OFF YOUR HEAD LIKE A CORK IN A--
NO, THAT'S TOO EASY.
I THINK I HAVE A BETTER IDEA.
...GLULK:...
I WANT YOU TO GO TO CHAOS, DEMON-- GIVE HIM A WARNING FROM ME.
TELL HIM WE'RE COMING FOR HIM, SLIME...
...AND TELL HIM TO BE AFRAID.

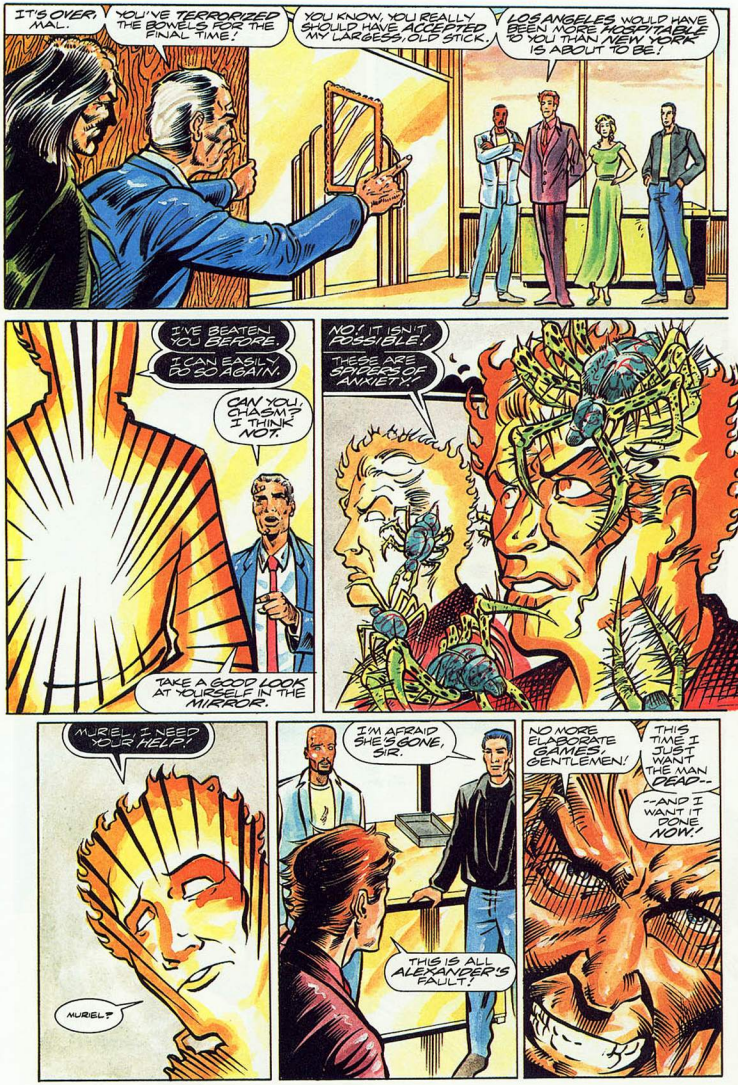
12:18 A.M.
TO THE REST OF NEW YORK, MAL TOWER IS STATE-OF-THE-ART: A SO-CALLED "SMART" BUILDING RUN COMPLETELY BY COMPUTERS...
...THE MOST SOPHISTICATED SKYSCRAPER IN THE HISTORY OF THE CITY.
BUT TO ONE WHO WALKS THE SUBSTRATUM, THE TOWER CAN BE SEEN FOR WHAT IT TRULY IS...
...CHASM'S FORTRESS, HIS TOWER OF PAIN...
...THE HOME WHERE HIS BLACK HEART EXISTS.


C'MON, PEOPLE-- THIS WAY!
HEY, YOU FOLKS, CRAZY OR WHAT?!
YOU CAN'T JUST BARGE IN HERE, PEOPLE!
I'M AFRAID YOU CAN'T STOP US!
MAYBE NOT, COMPADRE MIO...
...BUT WE SURE CAN!
IF YOU'RE WISE, FRIEND, YOU'LL STEP ASIDE, AND LET US PASS.
NO CAN DO, AMIGO.
GOT MY ORDERS.
BESIDES, BEFORE YOU AND YOUR POSSE DO ANYTHING WE ALL MIGHT REGRET...
...I GOT SOMETHING HERE, YOU REALLY OUGHT'A SEE.

OH... MY... GOD...
YEAH. WE'VE GOT YOUR FRIEND.
YOU GIVE US MORE TROUBLE, AND WE CUT OFF ANOTHER ONE.
Y-YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS.
SKINNER, THIS IS CUTBACK!
TIME TO SHOW OUR DOUBTING CHUM HERE JUST HOW SERIOUS WE ARE.
IF YOU HURT HER AGAIN--
OH, PLEASE-- NOT ANOTHER ONE!
LORD, WILL YOU NOT PROTECT YOUR HELPLESS SERVANT?
WE CLEAR ON THIS NOW?
ONE MORE STEP, AND OLD SKINNER STARTS SNIPPING!
MERCY...
IT'S OVER, AMIGO.
WHY NOT TURN AROUND AND GO BACK TO THE SEWERS, WHERE YOU BELONG?
BECAUSE WE CAN'T!
BECAUSE NO MATTER WHAT, SACRIFICES MAY HAVE TO BE MADE...
...CHASM HAS GOT TO BE STOPPED!
SKINNER, HE JUST DISAPPEARED.
GO AHEAD--CUT IT OFF! UHNH!

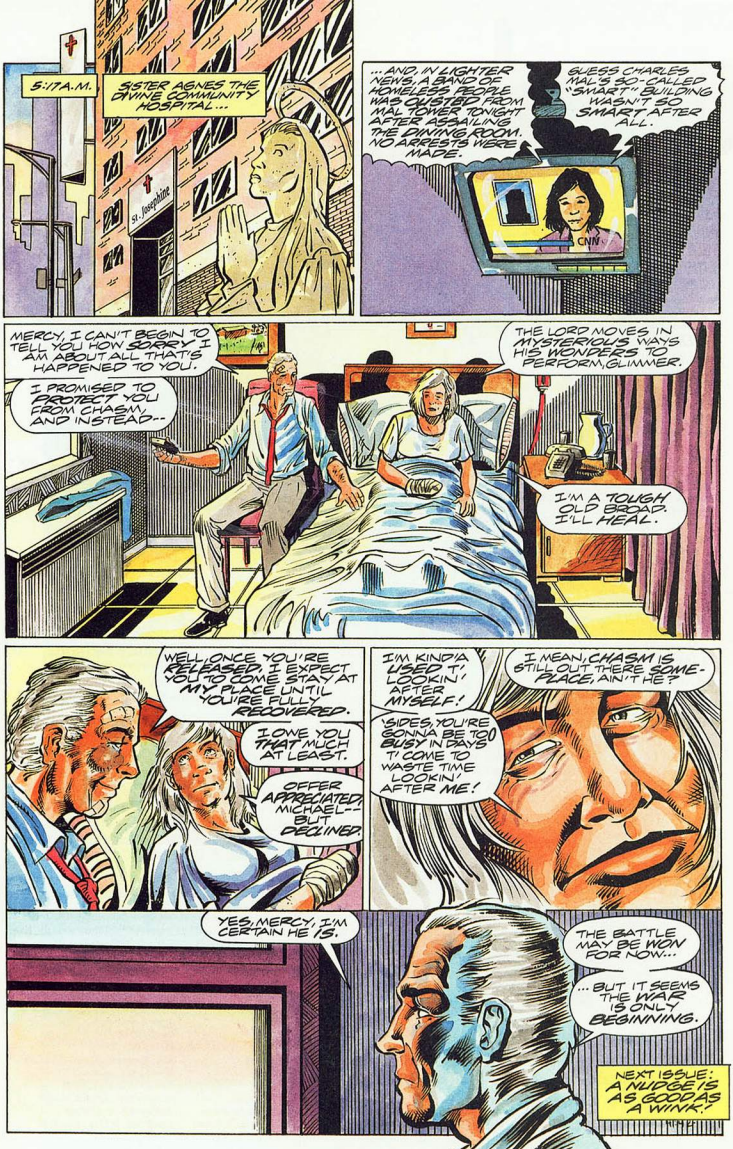
PHEW! HOW STRANGE...
HURRY NOW, PEOPLE--FOLLOW HIM.
THE LIGHT HAS SHOWN US THE WAY!
}UNNFF{
}UNNH{
}UGH{
LET MERCY GO, SKINNER--NOW!
YOU GOT GUTS, OLD MAN, I'LL GIVE YA THAT...
...BUT YOU AIN'T NONE TOO BRIGHT.
IT'S MICHAEL, LORD.
I KNEW YOU HADN'T FORSAKEN ME!
WANNA BET?
YOU WERE WARNED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU DESIED US, GRAN'PA.
SO I GUESS WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN NOW IS ON YOUR HEAD.
PLEASE--NO, NOT AGAIN!
YOU HEARD HER, SKINNER--
--THAT'S ENOUGH!
THIS IS WHERE THE MADNESS ENDS!
WHY, YOU CRAZY OLD--

I'M GONNA GUT YOU LIKE A GOAT, OLD MAN...
...AND MAKE YOU EAT YOUR OWN GIZZARD!
I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU, PUNK!
WELL, YOU SHOULD BE!
HEY! WHERE'D HE GO?!
TO A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN'T TOUCH ME, SKINNER...
...BUT I CAN DO WHATEVER I WANT TO YOU!!
HEY--!
HUHNF!
STOP PLAYIN' GAMES, OLD MAN.
STAND STILL, AND FIGHT ME FAIR.
YOU'RE NOT REALLY SERIOUS, ARE YOU?
HUHNF!
IN A FAIR FIGHT, YOU WOULD HAVE KILLED ME.
I'LL BE BACK, MERCY.
RIGHT NOW, I HAVE TO FIND CHAOS M.


IT'S OVER, MAL.
YOU'VE TERRORIZED THE BOWELS FOR THE FINAL TIME!
YOU KNOW, YOU REALLY SHOULD HAVE ACCEPTED MY LARGESS, OLD STICK.
LOS ANGELES WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE HOSPITABLE TO YOU THAN NEW YORK IS ABOUT TO BE!
I'VE BEATEN YOU BEFORE.
I CAN EASILY DO SO AGAIN.
CAN YOU, CHASM? I THINK NOT.
TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT YOURSELF IN THE MIRROR.
NO! IT ISN'T POSSIBLE!
THESE ARE SPIDERS OF ANXIETY!
MUREL, I NEED YOUR HELP!
MUREL?
I'M AFRAID SHE'S GONE, SIR.
THIS IS ALL ALEXANDER'S FAULT!
NO MORE ELABORATE GAMES, GENTLEMEN!
THIS TIME I JUST WANT THE MAN DEAD--
--AND I WANT IT DONE NOW!

YOU'LL HAVE TO COME THROUGH US TO GET HIM, BOYS...
... AND I DON'T THINK YOU WANT TO DO THAT, DO YOU?
NO, INDEED YOU DON'T.
YOU WANNA TAKE ON THESE GEEKS?
WHADDA YOU, CRAZY?
HEY, WE'RE REAL SORRY, MISTER MAL, SIR.
BUT YOU JUST AIN'T PAYIN' US ENOUGH TO GET KILLED OVER THIS.
FINE.
GO AHEAD AND RUN, YOU MISERABLE COWARDS.
I'LL FINISH THIS MYSELF.
LOOK AROUND YOU, MAL. IT'S ALREADY FINISHED.
YOU'VE ALREADY LOST EVERYTHING THAT REALLY MATTERS TO YOU...
...YOUR UNDERLINGS... YOUR POWER...
...THE WOMAN YOU LOVE...
WHAT IS THERE LEFT TO FIGHT FOR?
COME ALONG, FRIENDS. LET'S GO HOME.
CHASM WON'T BE BOTHERING YOU AGAIN...
...WILL YOU, CHAR--
HUH? GONE?
COWARD.
BEFORE WE LEAVE, MICHAEL, THERE'S ONE MORE THING WE NEED, ISN'T THERE?
YES, THERE MOST CERTAINLY IS.

12:57A.M.
OH, GREAT.
THE DOORS HAVE BEEN SEALED ELECTRONICALLY.
EXECUTIVE DINING AREA
THEN WE'LL TEAR THEM DOWN WITH OUR BARE HANDS, WON'T WE?
YES, WE WILL.
THESE PEOPLE DESERVE A CHANCE AT A DECENT MEAL.
HEY, LOOKS LIKE I SPOKE TOO SOON, GANG.
SEEMS SOMEBODY'S UNLOCKED THE DOORS FOR US!
DON'T KNOW WHO DID IT OR WHY...
...BUT I VOTE WE MAKE THE MOST OF IT!
MAN, AIN'T THIS THE LIFE?
I AIN'T ATE LIKE THIS SINCE THE CRASH OF '89!
SHUT UP AN' START CHEWIN', CHUCKIE!
MICHAEL, PLEASE JOIN US!
NONE OF US WOULD EVEN BE HERE IF IT WASN'T FOR YOU NOW, WOULD WE?
NO, I DON'T THINK WE WOULD.
NO, ROBERT, YOU ENJOY YOUR MEAL. YOU'VE EARNED IT.


5:17 A.M.
SISTER AGNES THE DIVINE COMMUNITY HOSPITAL...
St. Josephine
...AND, IN LIGHTER NEWS, A BAND OF HOMELESS PEOPLE WAS OUSTED FROM MAL TOWER TONIGHT AFTER ASSAILING THE DINING ROOM. NO ARRESTS WERE MADE.
GUESS CHARLES MAL'S SO-CALLED "SMART" BUILDING WASN'T SO SMART AFTER ALL.
CNN
MERCY, I CAN'T BEGIN TO TELL YOU HOW SORRY I AM ABOUT ALL THAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU.
I PROMISED TO PROTECT YOU FROM CHASM, AND INSTEAD--
THE LORD MOVES IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS HIS WONDERS TO PERFORM, GLINNER.
I'M A TOUGH OLD BROAD. I'LL HEAL.
WELL, ONCE YOU'RE RELEASED, I EXPECT YOU TO COME STAY AT MY PLACE UNTIL YOU'RE FULLY RECOVERED.
I OWE YOU THAT MUCH AT LEAST.
OFFER APPRECIATED, MICHAEL-- BUT DECLINED.
I'M KINDA USED T' LOOKIN' AFTER MYSELF!
'SIDES, YOU'RE GONNA BE TOO BUSY IN DAYS T' COME TO WASTE TIME LOOKIN' AFTER ME!
I MEAN, CHASM IS STILL OUT THERE SOMEPLACE, AIN'T HE?
YES, MERCY, I'M CERTAIN HE IS.
THE BATTLE MAY BE WON FOR NOW...
...BUT IT SEEMS THE WAR IS ONLY BEGINNING.
NEXT ISSUE: A NUDGE IS AS GOOD AS A WINK!

letters TO THE EDITOR

DEFIANT welcomes your comments.

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JOE JAMES
Production Coordinator

DEBBIE FIX
General Manager

CLARK SMITH
Sales & Marketing Manager

MICHAEL HURLEY
Advertising Sales

Dear Mr. Shooter,
Taking some poetic license from the title of an old Robin Williams album... *"DARK DOMINION!* What a concept!" I fell deeply in love with the book the first 12 times I read it. I am thoroughly enthralled with it and the possibilities to come.

The writing of Len Wein, the pencils of Joe James, and the work of the rest of the crew is absolutely fantastic! It mesmerized me! The way the story unfolds is magical, and I could not quit thinking about the concept of how different dimensions could operate. It will be exciting to see in which direction this book will develop: metaphysical, religious, philosophical, or a combination.

I have always been a supporter of Mr. Shooter's concepts and his work; he has improved the comic book industry not only from an economic point of view but also from the literary side. I'm happy we're able to live in a capitalistic country where we have the freedom to express our creativity in a plethora of ways, and thankful that Mr. Shooter uses his gifts and talents in such an inventive and creative fashion.

I work hard for my money, and when I purchase a book from your company, I know that I haven't spent it frivolously.

I am anxiously awaiting each of your future offerings.

With bated breath,
Travis J. Harder
Lamoni, Iowa

Dear Messrs.
Shooter and Wein,
A short while ago I finished reading my regular, monthly comic titles such as *Thor*, *Superman*, and *Sandman*. *DARK DOMINION* #1 had also arrived, and for whatever reason, I held off reading that until last. Then I picked up Michael Alexander's dark odyssey into the shadow-side of the collective unconscious.

Unbelievable. I haven't had a feeling of such novelty in the comics medium since I don't know how long—perhaps since *Sandman*, or maybe, strangely enough, since Simonson's epic run on *Thor*. For when I embarked on Simonson's great adventure oh-so-long-ago, I felt that something unique, something with tremendous potential, had begun.

It's the same with *DARK DOMINION*. Something that is equally unique and entertaining has come our way, and we have the mythopoetic engineers at DEFIANT to salute. I can't wait for more.

One suggestion: I gather from the ads in *Previews* that an issue #0 card set is going to be available. This seems to be the only way to get issue #0 as well as the 8-page *CHASM* comic. I feel it's unthoughtful for this to be the only way to read these stories. Perhaps you could market them another way as well. Those of us who don't collect cards don't want to be denied any adventures of Michael Alexander, or any other DEFIANT stories, for that matter.

Sincerely,
Dana M. Perkins
Maynard, MA

DARK DOMINION #0 and CHASM will be published in a trade paperback in 1994.

Dear DEFIANT,
After reading the first two issues of *WARRIORS OF PLASM*, I wasn't sure where I stood regarding your company. But after reading—er...inhaling, devouring—*DARK DOMINION*, I think you've found a fan.

Alfred Hitchcock used to direct his movies with two planes in mind: one for the typical viewer and one for the

more astute viewer who'd look between the lines and see the underlying meaning of his film. I think the idea Jim presents in this book is similar to Hitchcock's: that there are underlying meanings of things that most people do not or cannot see. This is the basis of Zen philosophy—looking at something with fresh eyes. Like Isaac Newton did when he saw the apple fall from the tree. Most people would have said, "Look, lunch!" But Newton observed this everyday happening from a different perspective and said, "Look, gravity!" (Jim's editorial is an example of why I believe he is one of the industry's best writers. I mean, how many people have taken the simple concept of biting an apple into "two fields of energy interacting, one shearing through the other"?)

I remember a 16-year-old, back in 1982, writing to Jim when he worked as the head man over at...well, we all know where... because he'd heard [a rumor] there was to be major revamping of characters on their flagship title, and he disapproved. Do you know what that 16-year-old got two weeks later? A letter in his mailbox from Shooter himself, stating that he did *not* intend to change any of the characters that this boy had grown to love. Imagine that! Despite being the head of the largest comics company around, Jim still had time to respond to some 16-year-old's letter. How do I know this? Because I was that 16-year-old, and, yes, Jim, I still have that letter.

I missed Jim's stint over at Valiant because I had taken a hiatus from comic book collecting, but after reading *DARK DOMINION* #1, I think DEFIANT can count on me as a loyal reader as long as it continues to produce such thought-provoking tales.

Defiantly yours,
Terrence J. Brady
Chicago, Il

Dear Deborah and Ed,
I like Steve Ditko. His work in the '60s had unquestionable influence on an emerging industry and a generation of readers. In the '70s and '80s, his work arguably did not reach the same heights as he once strove for, however, his imagination continued to offer some wonderful creations. Still, one wondered if his talent could extend into the new world of the '90s, where heroes are often villains and vice versa; could his style be competitive in a world full of image and less substance?

Surprisingly, *DARK DOMINION* #1 illustrated that it is more than possible. Ditko has crafted a charming character in Michael Alexander and an intriguing world with *DARK DOMINION*. As well, and most interestingly, Joseph James's art is faithful to Ditko's style, as if to show us how Ditko would be if he were an emerging talent today. His layouts—especially his extradimentional scenes—are pure Ditko and yet still retain an imaginative flow. The inks also aid the look, giving it a contemporary, '90s sheen.

The story itself started slow, though warmed up toward the end. There's clearly a great deal of promise here, especially since the title character is not a spandex-wearing superhero, but rather an ordinary man in extraordinary situations. The scripting was also well achieved, clearly Len Wein's best work in a quiet decade. It's good to see this imaginative talent reemerge.

DARK DOMINION is clearly a gamble: DEFIANT hoping that a normal-looking protagonist can carry a title. I think Michael Alexander can, and I'll be spending my $2.50 to ensure he does. Thanks for risking it all. As far as I'm concerned, it's paid off.

Mahalo,
Mark Lucas
Los Angeles, CA

According to the Donnell Foreign Languages Library, a division of The New York Public Library, "Mahalo" is a Hawaiian word meaning to glorify, to magnify, and to bless. It can also mean admirable and beautiful.

Dear Mr. Polgardy,
I enjoyed the first issue of *DARK DOMINION* a great deal. The concept of the book is so different from anything else on the market, one can't help but be drawn to it. Between this book and *WARRIORS OF PLASM*, you've come up with an incredibly original one-two punch.

So many companies promise that their books are going to be unlike anything readers have seen before, but when the goods hit the stand, they turn out to be the same old concepts under a different name. So far, DEFIANT has lived up to its promise. *WARRIORS OF PLASM* is totally original and, although *DARK DOMINION* makes a slight nod to vintage *Doctor Strange*, it is definitely blazing a path through virgin territory. You've made a fan of me.

Sincerely,
Lawrence Ganem
Ramsey, NJ

HERE IT IS!

WARRIORS OF PLASM™ Zero Issue

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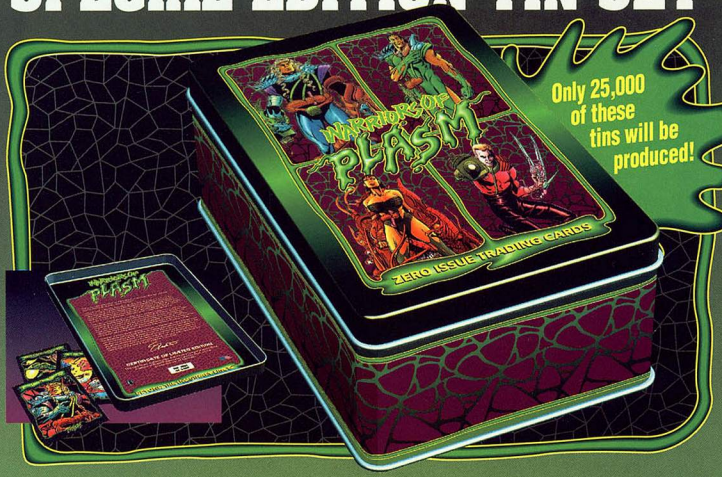

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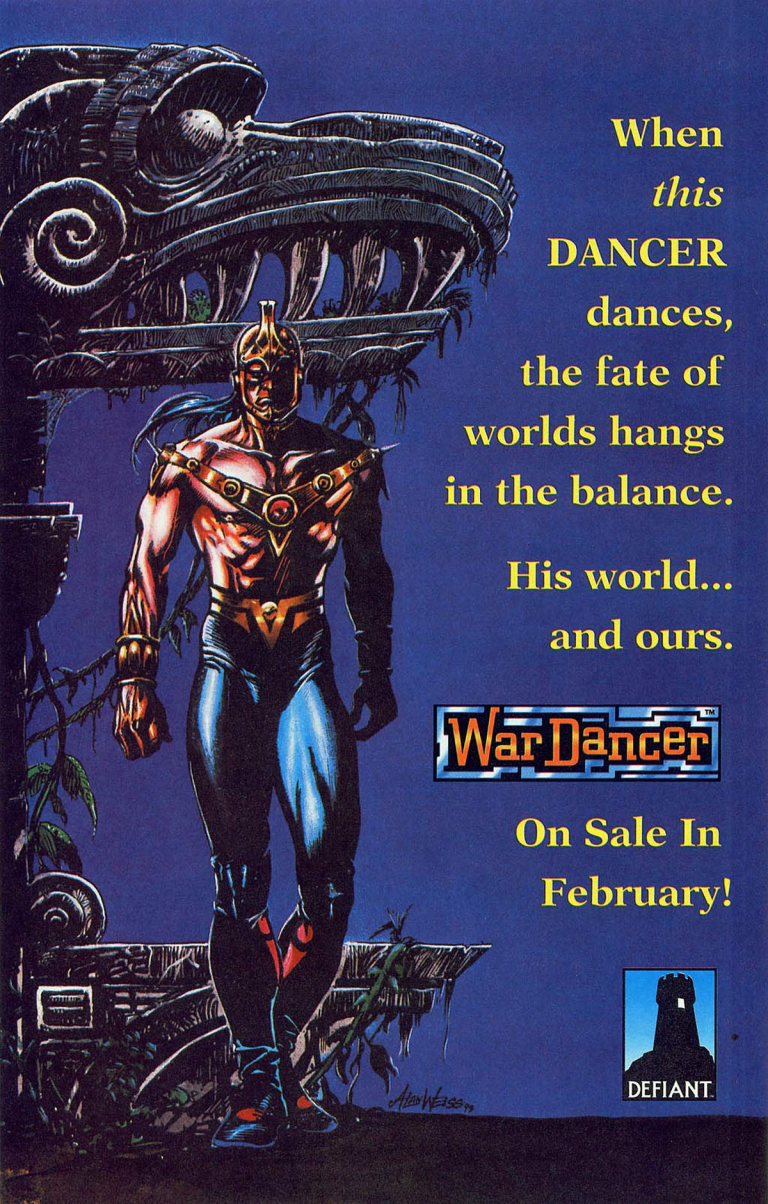
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Jim Shooter
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Len Wein was Editor in Chief of Marvel Comics in 1975 when I first met him. He knew my work from *Superman, Superboy, The Legion of Super-Heroes,* and other comics I'd written for DC during the previous decade. I'd been introduced by a friend to his *Swamp Thing* stories, which simply blew me away. Len offered me some writing assignments at Marvel, and I cheerfully accepted. I was really looking forward to working with Len.

Unfortunately, it just didn't happen. By the time I began writing for Marvel, Len had gone back to writing as well.

We did get to know each other a little, though. I remember one time when a bunch of us were hanging around the Marvel editorial office after work, somehow Len's description of the time he and Neal Adams had knocked down a wall at DC Comics while wrestling led to a reenactment—with me in the Neal Adams role.

Using a move I learned watching the superb film *King Kong vs. Godzilla,* I lifted Len off the ground—he's a big bear of a man, but I was in shape then—and tried to flip him onto the floor. He countered somehow, so that all I succeeded in doing was spinning us both around and slamming Len feet first into Roger Stern, who had been watching with bemused curiosity until impact. Roger flew backward like a batted ball, just as you'd expect. He was, after all, a mere human, cast by fate into the path of four hundred-plus pounds of lurching, spinning lunatics.

Publisher Stan Lee happened to be striding down the hall at that moment, on his way out. It was about 7:00 P.M. Human projectile Roger careened out the door of the editorial office into the hall, narrowly missing Stan before thundering into the wall.

Stan's head swiveled to stare for a second at poor, stunned Roger, now limply sliding down the wall, then swiveled to observe Roger's two-man propulsion unit. By this time I was rather badly off-balance and holding Len sort of upside-down. Though his expression revealed shock and amazement, Stan never broke stride and merely said, "Stay alive, men!" as he exited through the back door.

We all started laughing—Len, myself, and the puddle that was Roger. That's when I lost my footing and went down hard, dropping Len en route. Len landed on his head, I think, which may account for a few quirks in his behavior since then.

Soon thereafter, I became Editor in Chief of Marvel, but by that time Len had gone back to work for DC Comics. Though we remained friends, we never did work together.

Until DEFIANT.

I ran into Len last April at *WonderCon* in Oakland. He had some time in his schedule, and I needed a writer. Bingo.

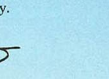
Len is writing *DARK DOMINION* and *WARRIORS OF PLASM,* and has written the *WARRIORS OF PLASM* Graphic Novel, "Home for the Holidays."

Len is, of course, the cocreator of the new *X-MEN* (with Dave Cockrum, who penciled "Home for the holidays"), *Swamp Thing, The Human Target,* and many other notable series. He's universally acknowledged as one of the finest writers and creators to ever grace our field—and he's doing the best work of his career. I respect him and his work beyond measure—he's been through good times and bad, triumphs and tragedies, and has come through it all with greater wisdom and sharper skills. Best of all, he still has that fire in his belly that made *Swamp Thing* great. He's at the peak of his powers. I'm very glad he's with us.

Len and I still wrestle sometimes—verbally—over story points, as any good editor and writer do, and we're having a ball.

But I bet just the *thought* of that makes Stan Lee quicken his pace...And Roger? He's probably searching for his flak jacket right now.

Defiantly.



Jim Shooter
FYM

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Ed Polgardy

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Back in early December of 1989, while I was struggling as a freelance writer, I found myself with very little money right before the Christmas holiday. At one point (before I ended up having to borrow some cash) I had only five bucks to my name. My refrigerator was empty save for a few slices of lunch meat and a couple of eggs. There wasn't anything but water to drink, and I knew my soon-to-be wife, Karen, was really thirsty for a soda. With visions of dwindling dollars dancing in my head, I decided to walk to a local deli and purchase a bottle of Pepsi. I was *sure* —or at least kept trying to convince myself—that my luck would change, and we'd end up with enough money to buy one another token Christmas gifts. For the moment, though, it was a leap of faith even to spring for that liter of cola.

I slipped on my jacket and headed up an alleyway towards Joe's Market. As I neared the rear of the deli, I spotted a filthy old man in tattered clothing rummaging through the store's garbage dumpster. I quickly recognized him as one of the handful of homeless people I'd seen wandering around my hometown. Continuing up the alley, I rounded the corner and entered the market.

On my way back, the old man was still behind the store, this time huddled next to the building eating scraps of bread. I felt sorry for the poor old guy, but again passed by him without stopping. As I continued to walk away, I couldn't shake the image of him devouring that bread, and wondered what his "meal" would consist of on Christmas day.

Halfway home I caught sight of three perfectly sculpted Wise Men—a beautifully painted ceramic display in the window of a tiny shop called The Christmas Corner. Moving up to the window, I looked inside. Sunlight was hitting the glass in such a way that it projected part of the shop's logo onto the roof of the manger centered in the crèche: The word "Christ"—the first half of "Christmas"—was cast atop that manger's mahogany surface. Having been raised a Catholic, I was instantly overwhelmed by guilt; I felt like someone "upstairs" was sending me an urgent message.

I turned around and hurried back to the homeless man. It looked like he thought I was insane, rushing up to him as I did. I told him I wanted to buy him something good to eat, and, ushering him into the deli, I ordered a triple-decker sandwich and a glass of milk. He was so happy, he thanked me over and over as he gobbled down the food.

On my way home, I began to worry about how I had just spent what was left of my five dollars. But the very next day, I received a call from one of the comic book companies where I had sent a proposal. They wanted to publish my story! Call it divine intervention, or karma, or whatever, but I felt I was being rewarded for helping someone less fortunate than I.

So maybe Charles Mal's "smart" building *wasn't* acting irresponsibly when it opened the doors to its cafeteria and allowed Michael Alexander's ragtag army of homeless friends to pinch a good meal. Maybe we'll hire that building to write the *PRUDENCE AND CAUTION*™ graphic novel next year!

Ed Polgardy

DEFIANT

Deborah Purcell

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

It's intriguing to me how, after twenty years in publishing, I find myself in virgin territory. Producing comic books is not a complete 180 from publishing magazines or books, but it *is* different—and therefore fascinating—in a number of significant ways.

To begin with, creating comic books is synonymous with creating characters—characters one "lives with" on a daily basis and therefore gets to know... and grows to believe in.

Intellectually, of course, I know that Mrs. J, and Rick, and Reverend Gilbert, and Shooter, and Cookie are fictitious—and are not listed in the New Jersey phone directories. At the same time, I almost feel like calling them up—Mrs. J, especially—to find out how they're doing...and, dare I say it?...to even ask them for a little tactical and moral support in getting along in my own life.

I feel certain that Mrs. J would be warm and sympathetic—understanding my problems, yet at the same time encouraging me to "keep my chin up." As for Rick, I'm not sure he would have all that much to say, but I have no doubt that I'd relish just being in his presence for a while, feeling comforted by his solidity and aura of calm, by his strong convictions that "right" will prevail. Cookie and I would probably become friends. She'd make me laugh (in a nice way) because she's a little bit of a bleeding heart, but I'd admire and want to emulate her courage and her strength of will; she'd be a worthy role model.

Preach is a little harder to decipher. Not that he's complicated as a human being—I don't believe that he is. But his commitment to religion, to his God, encapsulates him, in a sense. He certainly is a giving person, however, and I'm sure that, over time, his actions will express the depth and breadth of his character. I'd like to learn from him. And Shooter, who's fearless, and always tensed to leap into the fray, is a sure bet for instruction in stamina and endurance under pressure.

To a disinterested observer, it would sound absurd that these characters are becoming influential in my life. But Jim Shooter and David Lapham—who gave birth to the Warriors of PLASM, delineating them from their physiognomies to their psyches to their personalities—made them palpably real.

When Jim coined the slogan *Beyond the Imaginary Limits*, I didn't understand its meaning. Now I do. *Beyond the Imaginary Limits* is where Mrs. J, Reverend Gilbert and Shooter and Mouse and Nudge reside. I do not know why they exist or where they are going—but I *do* know that I feel inextricably linked to them.. that I have hitched myself to their star.

Deborah Purcell

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